



**Testimony
Education Committee
Sharon M. Palmer**

Feb. 28, 2011

Good morning Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann and members of the Committee. I am Sharon Palmer, President of AFT Connecticut, a diverse 28,000 member AFL-CIO union.

I will remark briefly on a number of the bills before you so that we are on the record.

SB 1038 Regarding Individual Education Plans and Continuing Education for Teachers: We support the changes to the IEP process. We support the concept in the continuing education language, but would prefer it be added to undergraduate study so that all new teachers have the knowledge base coming into the profession.

HB6432 Concerning Closing the Achievement Gap: Let me say that there is nothing wrong with this language. It follows a very typical pattern. What matters most though is what happens on the ground, in the districts, the communities and their schools. Certainly there should be coordination and assistance from the State Department of Education, but the lion's share of the work should be collaboration at the local level. Legislation should incentivize that collaboration. I doubt that any Board or Commission will discover something that hasn't already been written or tried. The trick is to get the right fit for the community and the school. That is where we should be concentrating our efforts.

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HB6431 Concerning the Minimum Budget Requirement: The bill freezes permanently the MBR at the 2009 level. 2013 is bad enough; permanent is disastrous. Other provisions of the bill invite municipalities to further cut Board of Education budgets to force economies that may not be attainable. We oppose this bill.

HB 6434 Regarding Educators and Administrators: We oppose this bill. Last year extensive work was done on these issues. A compromise was reached for non-public school teachers in considering the provisional vs. professional certificate. There was robust discussion and we believe the compromise position of provisional should remain. In addition, we currently have difficulty finding cooperating teachers for public school teachers. That should be the focus of our efforts.

As an observation let me state that we see more and more requirements for fully certified teachers and much less for alternate route teachers as well as out-of-state teachers. We don't understand this thinking and believe much more should be done to support our own Connecticut certified teachers. We should be spending more time working on reciprocity agreements with other states so that highly qualified teachers are treated consistently and can move smoothly to Connecticut certification.

SB 1040 Concerning Vocational Technical High Schools: The proposals in this bill should be set aside until a study group is convened and comprehensive findings are reported.

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